DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 212 437 RC 013 172

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TITLE The Mexican American Child in Special Education.
INSTITUTION ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, Las Cruces, N. Mex.
SPONS AGENCY National Inst. of Education (ED), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE Feb 82
CONTRACT 400-78-0023
NOTE 48p.
AVAILABLE FROM ERIC/CRESS, Box 3AP, NMSU, Las Cruces, NM 88003 (1-19 copies, $8.00 ea., 10% discount on larger quantities).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; Cognitive Style; Educational Discrimination; Educational Legislation; Gifted; *Labeling (of Persons); Language Skills; Literature Reviews; Mexican American Education; *Mexican Americans; Parent Participation; Parent School Relationship; *Special Education; Special Education Teachers; *Teacher Education; *Testing; Test Interpretation
IDENTIFIERS Culturally Different Students

ABSTRACT

The over-representation of minority group children, particularly Mexican Americans, in special education has been well documented. The use of standardized, norm-referenced, psychological assessment measures has created obstacles to the advancement of minority group individuals in American society. This is especially true since results from such measures are used as indicators of future accomplishments. The need for integration of cultural and linguistic characteristics into psychological assessment instruments is the challenge facing special education today. Although recent theoretical developments appear promising in terms of educational practice, they can only be as effective as those practitioners who apply the knowledge at the individual level. Therefore, the aspect of training becomes increasingly important, especially with the rapid development of theoretical and empirical knowledge concerning the educational achievement of minority group students, particularly Mexican Americans. (Author)

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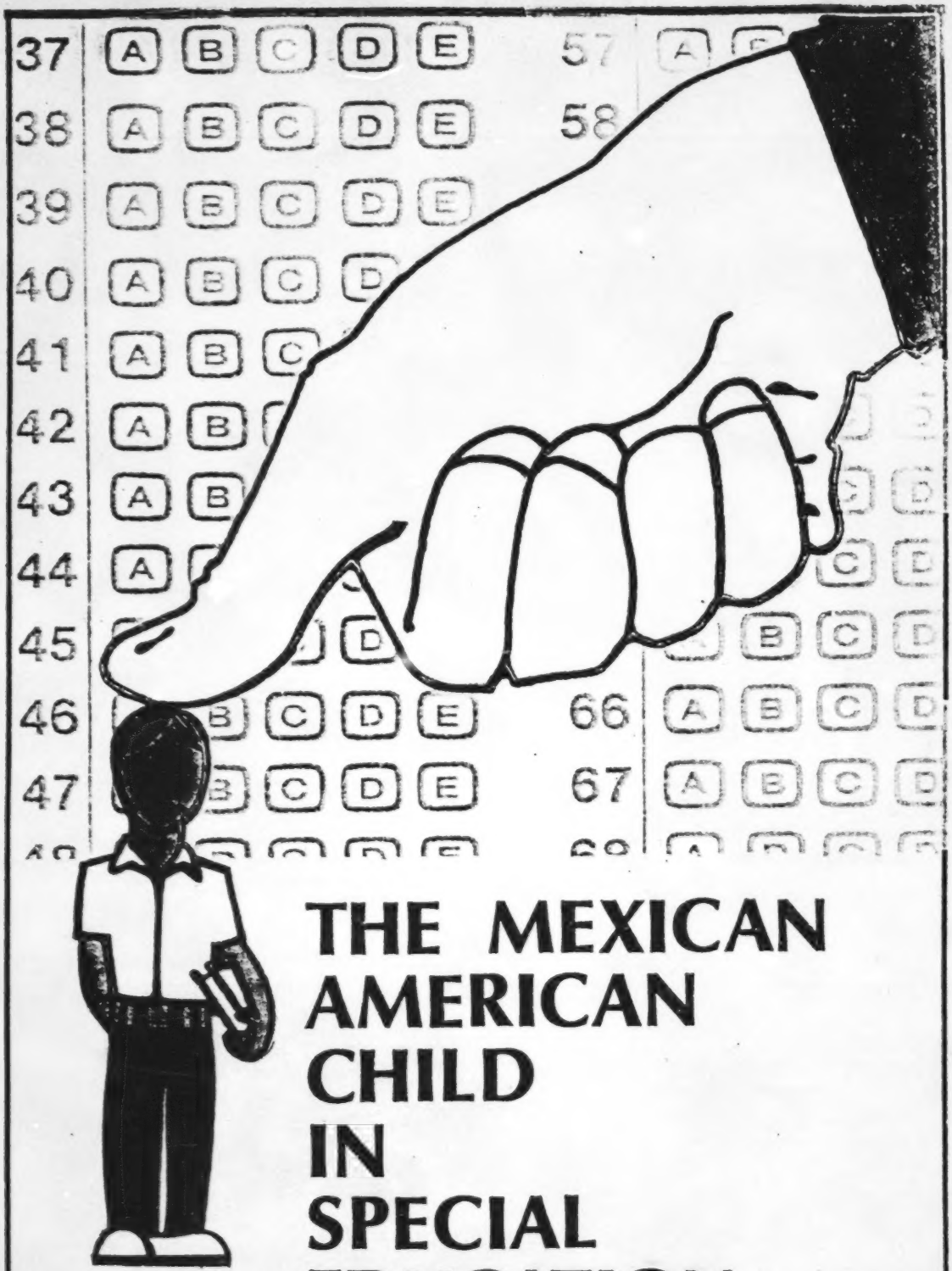

THE MEXICAN AMERICAN CHILD IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

RC013172

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THE MEXICAN AMERICAN CHILD IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

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February 1982

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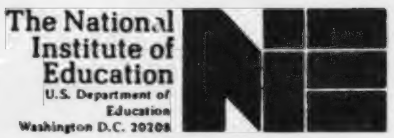

The ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools is funded by the National Institute of Education. The material in this publication was prepared pursuant to contract no. 400-78-0023 with the National Institute of Education, U.S. Department of Education. Contractors undertaking such projects under Government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their judgment in professional and technical matters. Prior to publication, the manuscript was critically reviewed for determination of professional quality. Points of view or opinions, however, do not necessarily represent the official view or opinions of either the clearinghouse's parent organization or the National Institute of Education.

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ABSTRACT

The over-representation of minority group children, particularly Mexican Americans, in special education has been well documented. The use of standardized, norm-referenced, psychological assessment measures has created obstacles to the advancement of minority group individuals in American society. This is especially true since results from such measures are used as indicators of future accomplishments. The need for integration of cultural and linguistic characteristics into psychological assessment instruments is the challenge facing special education today. Although recent theoretical developments appear promising in terms of educational practice, they can only be as effective as those practitioners who apply the knowledge at the individual level. Therefore, the aspect of training becomes increasingly important, especially with the rapid development of theoretical and empirical knowledge concerning the educational achievement of minority group students, particularly Mexican Americans.

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INTRODUCTION

Psychoeducational testing plays an important role in a person's life from preschool age through post-graduate years. An individual's intelligence test score largely determines the kind of education he receives and ultimately the kind of position he occupies within society (Mercer, 1971). Intelligence, therefore, is central to a person's life (Samuda, 1975).

Intelligence and academic achievement are the two primary areas evaluated in the public school. Our past and present policies of measuring intelligence and academic achievement involve the use of norm-referenced psychological assessment measures. However, several authors have voiced concern about the consequences of using standardized psychological instruments on culturally and linguistically different minority group children (Bernal, 1979; DeAvila and Pulos, 1977; Samuda, 1975). At least one consequence of standardized psychological assessment of culturally and linguistically different minority group children is over-representation in special education (Mercer, 1973). Part of the problem is that adequate assessment instruments have not been developed which can fairly assess children of different linguistic or cultural groups (Ayala-Vasquez, 1978).

Testing in the Labeling Process

Mercer (1972) found that schools were the primary social institution assigning persons to roles in American society. She stated that the amount and kind of education a person obtains determines whether he/she will participate in the mainstream of American life. As a result, educational decisions which systematically favor one group over others predetermine which group will occupy the seats of favor and which group(s) will remain powerless. According to Mercer, society has an efficient way of pushing aside problems by assigning individuals a status which carries specified role expectations. These roles are established so as to exclude individuals from certain social activities. Society's way of assigning status and role expectations is to attach a label to the individual.

Mercer (1971) pointed out that one of the major problems associated with labeling children is the use of inappropriate diagnostic techniques. According to Mercer, minority children perform poorly on psychological tests primarily because they lack the test-taking skills necessary to pass Anglo-oriented psychological measures. She urged

the development of more suitable diagnostic instruments/procedures. To further emphasize her point, Mercer conducted an epidemiological study in the Riverside, California area, which surveyed a sample of 10% of the community and hospital population. A total of 7,000 persons under the age of 50 were screened for symptoms of mental retardation. Also, 201 agencies which served the mentally retarded were surveyed. A case register was developed of those 800 persons who had been labeled mentally retarded. Mercer found that a disproportionate number of Blacks and Mexican American persons were labeled mentally retarded, more than could be expected based on their respective proportions in the population. The school was singled out as the chief labeler. Over half of the persons labeled mentally retarded had been labeled in the school. Mercer stressed that children from ethnic minority groups were not performing poorly on psychological tests, but also were more likely to be recommended for placement in classes for the mentally retarded than were Anglo children.

Sierra (1973) stated that minority group children are a diverse lot with respect to cultural, social, and psychological makeup, and generalizations about their particular cultural characteristics do a disservice to individual group members. Sierra drew the following portrait which mirrors the process leading to the placement of large numbers of Mexican American chidren in low-ability classes:

> Let's begin with the case of Juanito, or Pablo, or Pedro who is attending school for the first time. He comes to school with a language that has served him quite well for his first five years and with possibly some knowledge of English. He has grown up in a Mexican American family with traditional values unique to this culture and has been socialized in the culture. He goes to a school which reflects the values of the dominent society. This child comes in having a different language and a different culture from that of the school. He finds himself in a strange and threatening situation, not only with the need to master a new language, but to make immediate use of it in order to function as a student. Moreover, many of the social relationships and cultural attitudes on which the total program is based are completely outside his experience since the schools have made no attempts to use the wealth of experience he brings with him. The erroneous assumption is made that this child has existed in a cultural vacuum prior to the time he entered school. As the child moves on through school, the misconception continues that when he leaves the school he goes out into his neigborhood and into another cultural vacuum. There is little or no acknowledgement of the cultural values, experience, and background that the child already possesses.
>
> At the same time, because the school has failed to match the methods and curriculum to the child's language, cultural

> background and learning style, this child comes to be regarded as deficient. Time and again situations occur in the classroom in which a child responds to a task in a manner that appears random or stupid. (p. 43)

Bernal (1972) expressed the opinion that Mexican American populations everywhere have been victimized by the application of inappropriate psychological tests, which have become a means of legitimizing one of the most insidious methods of segregation and excusing the schools' reluctance to provide an adequate education for minority children. He further stated that discriminatory test practices have subjected minority groups to labeling, categorizing, and grouping in school. As a result, discriminatory test practices have led to a disproportionate number of Spanish-speaking children being placed in low-ability classes as a result of their performance on tests.

Educational decisions which affect a child's life and are made from psychological test results often ignore both individual subscale profiles and psychologists' admonitions. The result is a form of "default institutional racism" due to personal fiat and to pressures from state mandates. Furthermore, the failure of many Mexican American children to achieve in school or perform well on traditional achievement measures must be attributed to reasons other than alleged cognitive inferiority. Some of the reasons for poor performance lie in the designs of curriculum, classroom materials, language usage and content, and situational contexts used both in testing and curriculum situations (DeAvile and Havassy, 1974).

The Bay Area Bilingual Education League (BABEL) (1972) stated that more minority children have been labeled, placed, tracked, grouped, and guided on the basis of various test scores than from any other single factor in the classroom. They further stated that timed tests, motivational level of the examinee, and experience affected the test performance of minority group children. As a result, these children become victimized by the application of psychological tests which are culturally biased and measure experiences and skills alien to their culture. Although these positions are strongly stated, only Mercer (1972) cited data to support their positions.

Sociocultural Factors and School Achievement

The United States has recently witnessed a surge of interest in the sociocultural factors affecting the educational achievement of minority children (Samuda, 1975). Tireman (1948) stated that most minority children come from homes of low economic status. Consequently, their environment provides less academic stimulation than the environment of the more fortunate children. As a result, these disadvantaged children are educationally handicapped within the framework of middle-class values, standards, and attitudes.

Butcher (1968) stated that social and environmental factors play an important part in determining the extent to which potentialities are realized. Cultural level of the home, level of parental education, parental encouragement, reading facilities, and family speech background were identified as the environmental factors that determine the educational achievement of minority group children. He also stated that there exists a strong likelihood that genes set a limit or ceiling on cognitive ability, but in most people's lives, environmental circumstances impose a much lower one. Whatever proportion of variance in intelligence is ascribed to hereditary and genetic endowments, educators must act and plan as though environmental influences were crucial.

Pease (1966) stressed that the disadvantaged child learns early how not to listen, since his environment has trained him to tune out those things which to him are noise. He further emphasized that the disadvantaged children's environment of lower-class crowded conditions offers little opportunity for the kinds of environmental experiences useful to the child in the educational setting. The end result is a type of accumulative retardation, which becomes apparent at the time the child enters school.

Katz (1968) noted that to a disadvantaged child a test is just another place to be punished, to have one's weaknesses shown up, and to be reminded that one is at the tail end of the procession. He further emphasized that for minority group children repeated failures at school and tests have resulted in discouragement and diminished motivation to learn and work hard.

Test Content

Flaugher (1970) listed test content as an aspect in which educational tests were biased against minority groups. He stated that the test content was "totally irrelevant" to the culture and background of most minority groups. Griffiths (1971) emphasized that the content of educational tests discriminated against minority groups in such a manner that self-concept was damaged. She further stated that schools need to explore new methods of education which will measure each individual's academic potential and style of learning.

BABEL (1972) listed lack of complete explanations in oral and written test directions, lack of illustrations, and inappropriateness of test items as discriminatory against minority groups in a psychological testing situation. They also stated that examiners should consider test content as a primary reason for poor performance of many minority children, and not low intellectual ability. Hunt (1961) discussed further the issue of test content as he stated:

> In traditional tests what is sampled is typically normed in terms of such skill categories as verbal or arithmetic skill. The attempts by factor analysis yield what are

> probably best conceived as systems of coordinates which simplify the comparing of people in their test performance and perhaps facilitate making predictions about the efficiency of people. These systems of coordinates, regardless of the names given to them, may have little or nothing to do with the natural structures, schemata, operations and concepts, organized within individuals that determine their problem solving. (p. 311)

Alley and Foster (1978) also discussed content of educational tests. They stated that traditional assessment measures are unsatisfactory when used with minority groups, due to the cultural bias of test items. They presented the following example: "When is Washington's birthday?" If you are of the majority culture, you probably would answer "February 22." This response would be scored correct according to the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale scoring criteria. The implication is that you must associate "George" rather than "Booker T." with "Washington". The example, as discussed by Alley and Foster, is not condemnation of the Wechsler measures but rather an example of culture-bias found in most psychological tests. The example is representative of items that have caused psychologists to advocate calling a moratorium on administration of psychological tests to minority groups.

Examiner-Examinee Relationship

De Avila and Pulos (1977) argued that the testing of a child represents a social interaction among three potentially distinct cultures as reflected by the examiner, the test itself, and the child. In cases where those cultures "fail to match," results are found to be spurious. Also, the test situation provides a rather "limited sample" of behavior and requires the subject's full comprehension of the "demand characters" of the test.

Alley and Foster (1978) also discussed the examiner-examinee relationship in a testing situation. They stated that providing a minority group examiner to administer a test to a minority child was "simplistic," since the attitudes of one minority person toward another may reflect social class differences to a greater extent than racial and ethnic differences. Many teachers and scholars who come from minority groups or disadvantaged environments, when confronted with individuals whose present socio-economic predicament is like their own past, tend to react negatively to them, possibly to escape the painful memory of their own past. Also, the choice of examiner is not enough to assume non-discriminatory testing. To obtain non-discriminatory results, the examiner, minority or otherwise, must use alternative measures that more appropriately evaluate the child's competence.

Piersel, Brody, and Kratochwill (1977) further examined the relationship of examiner and minority child in a psychological testing

situation. In their study a short form of the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Chidren--Revised was administered to 63 disadvantaged minority group children under either self-monitoring feedback for correct and incorrect responses, standardized administration, or a pretest vicarious experience of a minority child being administered a test by a female Anglo examiner. The results revealed that the latter group had significantly higher IQ scores than those in the standardized administration or the feedback conditions. Test scores seemed to increase as amount of apprehension decreased. The data suggested desensitization need not occur through direct contact with an examiner.

Anastasi (1968) referred to psychological tests as tools and, like tools, their effectiveness depends on the knowledge, skill, and integrity of the examiner and interpreter. If a minority child performs poorly on a test, it is essential to investigate why he/she did so. In her opinion, factors such as poor reading or inadequate knowledge of the test content, and lack of test-taking experiences, motivation, and rapport with the examiner must be considered. Anastasi further stated that in testing children of low socioeconomic status many examiners rush through the test, recording answers casually, and thus finish the test before the required time allotted for the test.

Interpreting Test Results

According to Stanford (1963), it is more accurate to say that the results of psychological tests, when applied to most minority group children, reveal their operational level in an English-speaking society at a given point in time, rather than establishing their mental ability. Anastasi (1976) also discussed the issue. She stated that proper interpretation of test scores requires a complete understanding of the test, the individual, and the testing conditions. When testing minority group children, consideration must be given to factors that may influence the interpretation of the score. Factors such as unusual testing conditions, temporary emotional or physical state of the subject, and extent of the subject's previous experiences with tests can affect the overall performance of the minority child. Hunt (1961) emphasized the issue further as he stated:

> It would appear to be outside the realm of scientific possibility to predict with precision the future characteristics of any organism from knowing merely its present characteristics, without being able to specify the future conditions under which it will live. Since it is impossible to specify what any person's future encounters with his environment will be, attempting to predict his future behavior from test performance alone is at best a matter of statistical empiricism. At worst it smacks of occult prophecy. (p. 311)

Samuda (1975) stated that the debate concerning standardized tests and the interpretations placed on the scores by minority groups has intensified in recent years. The major concern has been the pervasive and potentially harmful influence that tests and their interpretations have on the individual's life.

Lack of Skill with English

Bryen (1976) discussed the language aspect of psychological tests and stated that most tests fail to measure the language development of children whose language is other than English and who come from different cultural backgrounds. She emphasized that if the purpose of psychological assessment is to determine whether or not a child has mastered standard English, then it is appropriate to use a test based specifically on standard English. Children's inadequacy in standard English should be assessed, but knowledge of how any individual is developing within his/her language system is also important. Furthermore, Bryen expressed the idea that many minority children face the risk of being judged intellectually inferior solely on standard English test results.

According to Hernandez (1969), disadvantaged children are poorly prepared for the demands schools will make on them. This lack of preparation is demonstrated in the child's limited English proficiency, which in turn affects his/her skills in communication and academic achievement in the educational setting. He also stated that school for most minority children is a place where they learn to read, write, and do numbers only to the level where they are capable of sustaining themselves and contributing to the family income.

According to Gonzalez (1973), most IQ tests rely heavily on language, and normally no attempt is made to determine the minority child's level of proficiency in the language or dialect in which the test is administered. As a result of this linguistic bias, psychological tests are cuturally Anglocentric. Language characteristics of minority groups such as Blacks, Chicanos, and Native Americans should be properly integrated into assessment instruments, to help alleviate the bias that current instruments have against speakers of other languages or dialects of English which are considered nonstandard.

According to Samuda (1975), Mexican children face an evident language obstacle when taking tests, and as a result are placed in the lowest ability classes. He also stressed that psychological standardized tests are Anglocentric and mirror the language, standards, values, and experiences that Anglo middle-class persons share. In spite of the fact that cultural diversity exists in the United States, the language used in education is English.

Grill and Bartel (1977) discussed the issue of cultural bias in psychological tests. In their study, Grammatic Closure, a subtest of

the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities (ITPA), was examined to determine the extent to which an alleged bias exists against speakers of nonstandard English. A total of 23 of the 33 subtest items were identified as potentially high risk for dialect speakers. Data collected from 38 Black and White children were analyzed for error responses for 11 of the high-risk items. Responses that were appropriate in non-standard English accounted for 52% to 100% of all errors. The authors concluded that this subtest or any measure requiring the child to maintain a high language proficiency level in standard English is inappropriate for use as a diagnostic instrument with children who use nonstandard English.

Until recently, there were few minority professionals well versed in the knowledge of psychometrics and statistics. Only in the past 10 years or so have test producers been seriously challenged through publications, lawsuits, and conferences instituted by a growing cadre of well-trained minority psychologists and educators. For the first time, the testing establishment has been forced to deal with challenges on the emotional level, the rhetorical level, and the technical level. What is questioned is the methodology of norm-referenced testing itself and, more particlarly, the conclusions and consequences flowing from the analysis of test results (Samuda, 1976).

Presently there exists an emerging trend of minority groups seeking self awareness and asserting pride in their own cultures. This movement has generated efforts to develop valid assessment techniques, terminate detrimental labeling practices, and insure educational placements in the best interest of individual minority children.

Mercer (1973) suggested the use of pluralistic norms for interpreting the meaning of a test score. She also stated that it is not possible to consider Blacks or Mexican Americans as homogeneous social categories or to hold sociocultural factors strictly constant statistically by controlling only for ethnic groups. In her opinion, pluralistic norms evaluate the performance of a person only in relation to others from similar sociocultural backgrounds. To emphasize her point, Mercer provided the following example:

> If he is a Mexican American child and manages to achieve 75 on an intelligence test when he comes from an overcrowded, Spanish-speaking home in which the father has less than an eighth grade education and was reared in a rural area and his mother does not expect him to finish high school, he should be diagnosed as having normal ability. (p. 249)

With reference to the pluralistic approach, the reason this child is classified as normal and not to be considered for special education services is that he scored within one standard deviation of his sociocultural group. His low score on the psychological test reflects his lack of opportunities rather than a learning deficit.

Standardized testing, which was originally designed to remove the unfairness of privilege and to improve the educational provisions for children who did not profit from normal class instruction, has in practice tended to preserve and reinforce class and social biases in the selection process. Inevitably, those who suffer most are the students from ethnic minorities and disadvantaged children who are "caught" within the educational system (Samuda, 1975).

There is little question that traditional testing practices have created obstacles in the advancement of minority groups in Anglo-oriented society (Bryen, 1976; Samuda, 1975). In spite of legal actions, school systems continue to label minority group children as slow learners, retarded, underachievers, etc., solely on the basis of diagnostic evaluations which are inappropriate for the child's language and culture (Gonzales, 1974).

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Schools Discriminate Against Minorities

American public education operating under the "melting pot" theory has failed to provide culturally democratic educational environments (Jaramillo, 1969). A new social philosophy must be formulated if schools are ever to meet the educational needs of minority group children who are products of socialization experiences different from those of the Anglo American middle class (Castaneda, 1976). The basis for this reformulation is implied in the concept of cultural democracy, that is, the right of every American child to remain identified with his own home and community socialization experiences, regardless of whether these experiences are designated ethnic, cultural, or social (Hernandez, 1969). Schools should actively contribute to the positive development and strengthening of experiences minority group children have and regard them as valuable in their own right (Castaneda, 1976; Mercer, 1971; Samuda, 1975).

In a society that is becoming pluralistic and is focusing on the needs of minority groups, ways must be explored which put psychoeducational assessment at the service of diversity. Educators, administrators, and psychologists must pull away from the single-mode concept of academic development and move toward the recognition of pluralism in the educational process (Samuda, 1975, 1976).

Culturally different children, and specifically minority group children, have been at a disadvantage in the traditionally Anglo-oriented educational system (Mercer, 1973, 1976; Mercer and Lewis, 1977; Samuda, 1975, 1976). Donofrio (1972) stated that culturally different minority group children, when compared to children from a more affluent social milieu, are at a definite disadvantage when competing in an urbanistic, highly competitive, and educationally-oriented environment such as educational systems traditionally maintain. As a result, educational advancement is restricted for the minority child.

Mercer and Lewis (1977) pointed out that minority group children are forced to function in the "Anglocentric Model" and, as a result, are restricted in educational opportunities. The result has been treatment of culturally and linguistically different minority group children as different, deviant, and consequently exceptional (Samuda, 1975, 1976).

The problem, therefore, is a sociopsychological one since the school is not meeting the needs of the minority group child as the

student and his parents see them. Instead what is offered is irrelevant academic subject matter, lack of academic success, and self-fulfilling prophecy. That is to say, lack of success creates more failure, which is what is expected by student and teacher (Hernandez, 1969).

Diggs (1974) emphasized that educational systems are being challanged to better educate culturally different children. He stated that educational systems need to become "sensitized" to the educational needs of minority groups so as to enhance academic success. Also, educational systems must focus on the development of cooperative educational centers which would eliminate educational barriers and expand the concepts of education.

Samuda (1976) pointed out that the traditional "educational society" has discriminated against minority groups. He stated that the educational society has forced the shaping of minority group children to fit the school system rather than school systems being shaped to fit the needs of these children. In his opinion, educational systems lack the ability to accomodate and utilize change. As a result, the systematic development of curricula, instructional materials, etc. places minority, disadvantaged children in a "failure posture" through no fault of their own.

The negative outcomes produced by a monocultural educational approach have been opposed on philosophical, legal, and humanistic grounds. Klassen and Gollnick (1977) stated that if meaningful and lasting changes are to be made in educational practice, arguments must be based on more than philosophy and humaneness. Specifically, they proposed that an empirical basis be established to support, maintain, and perhaps modify a pluralistic approach to education in the United States. In their opinion, empirical evidence to support a pluralistic approach has begun to accumulate from several diverse areas.

Systematic investigation of educationally-related variables associated with cultural/linguistic difference is relatively recent. However, a growing body of related empirical knowledge demands further consideration of cultural/linguistic factors in educational practice. It appears that there are several correlates of cultural/linguistic background which may directly influence successful outcomes in school. Although it is premature to specify causal relationships between cultural/linguistic background and these correlated variables, it is justifiable to say that a relationship does exist. These variables include but are not limited to cognitive, perceptual, personality, and learning characteristics.

Differences in Personality/Social Development

A number of investigations comparing Anglo American and Mexican American children have demonstrated that Anglo American children are more competitive and less cooperative than Mexican American children (Avellar and Kagan, 1976; Kagan and Madsen, 1971; Madsen and Shapira, 1970). Typically these studies have employed experimental games which allow measurement of prosocial or competitive behavior, either in dyadic or group interaction situations (McClintock, 1974) or in peer-absent situations (Kagan, Zahn, and Gealy, 1977).

McClintock (1974) proposed that differences in social motivation may account for lower achievement in school. In a test of this hypothesis, Kagan et al. (1977) found that only in kindergarten and second grade was competitiveness significantly related to school achievement. However, it appears that the Mexican American sample in the study was relatively acculturated. This interpretation is supported by the fact that the differences in competitiveness and prosocial behavior between the two ethnic groups were smaller than observed in previous studies. In spite of this one study, ethnic differences have reliably and consistently been reported in this area and further studies are needed to document the role of this difference in school achievement.

Differences in Cognitive Styles

Data have shown there are meaningful and stable differences in the ways in which individuals select and organize environmental input. Individual differences on this dimension have come to be known as cognitive style. A review by Keogh (1973) concluded that there is general agreement that "cognitive style" refers to individual consistencies in information seeking and information processing across a variety of problem-solving situations.

One cognitive style aspect which has received considerable attention is Witkin's field dependence-independence construct (Witkin, Lewis, Hertzman, Machover, Meissner, and Wapner, 1954). Those who are able to overcome the influence of a surrounding perceptual field by differentiating or distinguishing parts from the whole are described as "field independent"; those more influenced by context or background are termed "field dependent" (Witkin, Dyk, Faterson, Goodenough, and Karp, 1962).

Several studies have examined cultural background as a correlate of cognitive style. For example, Anglo American children have consistently been found to be more field independent than Mexican American children (Buriel, 1975; Kagan and Zahn, 1975; Ramirez and Price-Williams, 1974; Sanders, Scholz, and Kagan, 1976). Most recently, however, a methodological controversy has arisen with regard to the instrumentation used to measure this construct. When a multimethod approach was used to measure field dependence-independence

in a sample of 40 Mexican American and Anglo American children, Buriel (1978) found low intercorrelations between the measures for the Mexican American but not for the Anglo American children. Research interest in cultural differences in cognitive styles is understandable when viewed in the context of educational implications.

A major impetus to cross-cultural research in cognitive styles is the assumed relationship between preferred cognitive style and school achievement. For example, Kagan and Zahn (1975) found a correlation between field dependence and lower reading and math achievement test scores. However, Buriel (1978) found no significant main effects of culture or field dependence in comparing field dependence measures to reading and math achievement scores. There appears, however, to be some evidence to support the favored relationship between field independence and educational achievement for exceptional and non-exceptional populations. In a comprehensive review of research with both normal and exceptional populations, Keogh (1973) concluded that it seems reasonable that some educational environments are especially facilitating for children with particular modes of perceptual organization, whereas other environments might be detrimental to children with these styles. In addition to the relationship between cognitive style and school achievement, there is at least one other reason why differences in cognitive style might be important. This concern is focused more on the aspect of value orientation (Castaneda, 1976).

Witkin et al. (1962) proposed that field dependence and field independence do not differ in value or worth. Yet descriptors of field dependence tend to be less positive than those used to describe field independence. For example, field dependence has been associated with a more conciliatory and accomodating interpersonal style (Oltman, Goodenough, Witkin, Freedman, and Friedman, 1975). In addition, some investigators have described field independence in a more positive manner than field dependence (Ruble and Nakamura, 1972). The implicit value orientation associated with cognitive style difference led Keogh (1973) to conclude that the field independent strategy is favored; yet to hypothesize that this attitude may be reflected in the design of formal educational programs is speculative.

Although reliable differences have been documented in the area of cognitive styles, there are several unresolved problems. For example, although reliable differences may be found in the measurement of different cognitive styles, there are problems at the interpretive level. Specifically, while measurement of the concept is primarily perceptual, interpretations of differences are made in terms of cognitive functioning and even personality and social characteristics. In addition, the complex relationship among the variables of culture, cognitive styles, and school achievement remains to be definitively resolved. This relationship becomes even more complex when the variable of exceptional/nonexceptional status is added. In spite of these difficulties, the issues can no longer be ignored in the design of educational programs (Castaneda, 1976).

Inappropriate Curricula and Instructional Materials

Most teaching strategies and curricula were developed when it was believed that this country should be and was a "melting pot" (Jaramillo, 1974). Traditional Anglo-oriented curricula fail to discuss historical contributions which minority group forefathers made to our great American heritage. Jaramillo emphasized that classroom behaviors such as correct pronunciation of a child's name and allowance of a "working together" atmosphere within the classroom were behaviors allowed and reinforced in most minority groups' homes, especially Mexican American, and should be an integral part of any classroom environment.

Jaramillo (1974) stated that traditional Anglo-oriented curricula are a carbon copy of other adopted innovations, which have little thought for the specific pupil population(s) they will serve. As a result, only the average Anglo middle-class student performs satisfactorily. The disadvantaged, culturally and linguistically different child finds the curricula totally irrelevant and in conflict with his/her culture.

It has been stated (Bryen, 1976; Gonzalez, 1973; Griffiths, 1971) that most culturally different, disadvantaged children who come from low socioeconomic backgrounds and from home environments which exhibit low interest levels lack the necessary verbal skills to perform adequately in Anglo middle-class standardized educational curricula. As a result, there exits an "unbalance" in the traditional instructional process when presented to these children.

Dabney (1976) emphasized that to ignore culture and ethnicity identification in curricula is to contribute to the self-fulfilling prophecy in the negative sense. He further stated that differences between minority group populations and the mainstream group are seen as deficits to be overcome rather than chracteristics to be utilized and developed. Furthermore, curriculum relevance is that which connects the affective, feeling aspect and the cognitive, knowing aspect.

Rosenberg (1972) stressed that cultural bias exists both in curricula and instructional materials when employed with minority group children. He stated:

> It does not take long for the learner to get the message about other racial, religious, ethnic and social class groups. The message concerns such critical dimensions as group image, power or powerlessness, level of group expectations and group life, role and goals. In the very matter of inclusion and exclusion, in the quantity of representation, in the position and placement of materials, in editorial commentary, the learner absorbs certain attitudinal assumptions and understandings. (p. 27)

Griffiths (1971) stated that the content taught in the schools discriminates against the minority child. The example presented by Griffiths emphasizes the issue--a teacher pointing to the chart with the picture of a "good" breakfast which includes bacon, eggs, sausage, and orange juice. For breakfast the Mexican American child has papas fritas, chile, una tasa de cafe con leche, y una tortilla. The Mexican American child now believes that the "good" breakfast is what he should eat and the next time he brings his lunch from home, he will hide it and eat in private because he is ashamed of his diet. Griffiths further stated that schools need to explore each child's learning style so as to offer all children the same experiences and opportunities to learn, allowing each child to develop to his fullest potential and supplying the child with experiences relevant to his own lifestyle. In her opinion, children gamble when they go to school, but the minority child plays with a "stacked deck."

Frasier (1979) offered the following instructions to educators and curriculum builders when developing curricula for disadvantaged children:

1. The fact that a family is economically disabled does not necessarily mean that love and affection do not prevail in the home. The poor, ragged child may be rich in love and affection, which are significant determinants of school success.

2. Low income children do not necessarily suffer from sensory deprivation or a lack of stimulation. They are surrounded by sensory stimulation. What they may lack are experiences that have definite educational value and that lay the groundwork for future academic growth.

3. In many fundamental ways poor children's cognition is quite similar to that of middle class children. There are cognitive universals or modes of language and thought shared by all children. There may exist social class differences in cognition, yet these differences are rather superficial. One must not make the mistake of calling them dificiencies.

4. Language is merely one element of a cultural orientation that clashes with the school's values, and it is this conflict, not a deficit in language, which largely accounts for poor performance in school.

5. Frequently the best way of motivating an unmotivated pupil is to ignore his motivational state for the time being and to concentrate on teaching him as effectively as possible. Much to his surprise and to his teacher's, he will learn despite his lack of motivation; and from the satisfaction of learning he will characteristically develop the motivation to learn more. (p. 17)

Only in recent years have minority disadvantaged populations received the deliberate attention of educators. The problem has been one of identification, and then of appropriate education. Previous remediation approaches exemplify the first part of the old Chinese proverb, "Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day." Future problem-solving and decision-making skills should exemplify the option expressed in the last line of this proverb, "Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a life-time."

FUTURE TRENDS

Bilingual Special Education

Recent civil rights activity has resulted in the incorporation of significant sectors of the populace into the mainstream of American social and economic activity. A parallel movement has also occurred recently with regard to the handicapped. This movement has resulted in formalized guarantees regarding the rights of the handicapped in several areas.

The primary legislative result of the new awareness of the handicapped in terms of educational provisions is embodied in P.L. 94-142 (Education for All Handicapped Children Act). One of the important philosophical viewpoints contained in this legislation includes normalization, or the inclusion, to the extent feasible, of handicapped individuals in everyday activities. It is apparent that for a small minority of handicapped children the goal of normalization is as yet unattainable, at least in educational provisions. This minority of handicapped children includes those of cultural and linguistic groups different from those of the majority culture. At the most basic level, the reason that these bilingual exceptional children will be unable to achieve educational normalization is that at present, trained personnel capable of dealing with the diverse educational needs of this group do not exist. Furthermore, educational programs for many bilingual exceptional children are inadequate, underdeveloped, unsystematic, and are taught by personnel who are not trained in, and are therefore not capable of dealing with, the diverse educational needs of this group. It is apparent, then, that for this group the goal of receiving a free and appropriate education is unattainable (Rueda and Prieto, 1979).

Several authors have voiced serious concerns regarding the poor progress bilingual children have made in special education as presently structured (Gallagher and Kinney, 1974; Rich, 1978; Samuda, 1976). These authors agree that special education was never designed to meet the needs of ethno-linguistically different children, whose exceptionality has been coupled with the added dimensions of language and cutural diversity. The overlapping of dimensions creates an added difficulty in pinpointing clear-cut exceptionalities, thereby fostering inappropriate and irrelevant curriculum development (Bernal, 1972; Mercer, 1976). The resulting exclusion and/or inclusion of inappropriately designed educational practices and programs are now considered illegal under P.L. 94-142. Therefore, there exists at present a critical need for appropriate, well-designed educational programs and instructional strategies for bilingual exceptional children.

There are several factors which are indicative of both the poor progress these children have made in special education as presently structured, as well as the need for training personnel to deal with the needs of these children. These factors include: (a) over-representation, (b) biased assessment practices, (c) impact of negative labels, (d) teacher attitudes and expectations, (e) lack of minority personnel in special education, and (f) culturally irrelevant curricula.

In addition there have been some suggetions that education, as presently structured, does not take into account diverse learning styles and cognitive development of bilingual minority group children. If these particular areas of concern exist in general education, they almost certainly exist in special education.

Some authors have stated that language or language style is the only means by which the transmission of knowledge is possible (Gonzalez, 1973; Jaramillo, 1974). They further state that a child is born with the ability to learn a language, and will speak the language most often heard and used in a speech community. Frequently, the language most often heard and spoken is code-switching, or the alternation of two languages (codes). That is, through the process of cross-cultural contact, i.e., Spanish and English, many bilingual speakers have developed the use of two languages to convey social meaning (Gumperz, 1974). This language pattern provides them with communicative competence that serves them well during the first five years of life. However, in school the child confronts a situation that requires her/him not only to master English but to make immediate use of it in order to function as a student (Sierra, 1973).

Bryen (1976) and Gonzalez (1973) have stated that bilingual children come to school with a language pattern already developed in English and Spanish. Although most of these children do not receive any formal training in either language before entering school, they develop linguistic competence by using both languages interchangeably through interactions with parents, family, and peers. This emphasizes the distinction that needs to be made between the strictly psycholinguistic aspect of language and sociolinguistic or pragmatic aspects. Although the linguistic aspects appear to play a major role in cognitive development, the pragmatic or communicative aspects of language can also be considered to play a major role in cognitive development and social competence.

Research has shown that code-switching proceeds in accordance with grammatical and functional principles (Genishi, 1978). In addition, it functions to mark situational changes and stylistic expressions more clearly than do alternations for the monolingual (McClure and Wentz, 1978). Furthermore, code-switching permits expressions of trust and self-worth, thus increasing student motivation (Wentz and McClure, 1976), and provides for an educational environment that virtually eliminates linguistic barriers to learning, thereby promoting communication and participation (Gumperz, 1974). Finally, research done in the field of metalinguistics provides us with further

support for the contention that the use of two languages is an intellectual asset, and not a deficit as has been believed (Cazden, 1972). Acceptance of the functions that code-switching serves might produce better academic results than a constant preoccupation with maintaining a single language.

It is no mystery today that special education teachers are no better prepared to teach bilingual exceptional children than the regular educator who first referred the children. Some authors have stated that at present there is an extreme shortage of minority group professionals in special education and related fields (Gonzales, 1979). Further, at present there exist only a few university training programs for those wishing to work in special education settings with bilingual exceptional children. Therefore, the need exists not only for training educators to teach bilingual exceptional children, but for developing appropriate methods to be used, i.e., the use of code-switching communication in the instructional program.

P.L. 94-142 guarantees a "free and appropriate" public education to be provided to all exceptional children, including those bilingual/minority group children who have traditionally been ignored, excluded, or inappropriately served in special education. However, such an undertaking will require personnel appropriately trained to deal effectively with the special and complex needs of these unique exceptional children.

Teacher Preparation

The preparation of special education teachers to teach in a multicultural setting has been nonexistent until the past five years. Gonzales (1979) stated that demands of recent legislation and litigation for providing equality in education, regardless of cultural and linguistic differences, and providing this education in the least restrictive environment, have caused university teacher training programs to train special educators more effectively to function in a multicultural setting.

Teacher training programs have been avoiding the issue of bilingual minority group children in special education classes. The unique problems bilingual minority group children bring into the special education classroom should stimulate instruction related to individual modes of academic development, cognitive style, and motivational level (Rueda and Prieto, 1979). Reynolds and Risley (1968) stressed that disadvantaged minority children lack educational skills because of the economic state of the home. In their study, adult social reinforcement and access to materials in the preschool were made contingent on the verbalizations of a 4-year-old Negro girl with an extremely low frequency of talking. Though the teachers' social attention was always given immediately for all spontaneous speech if the child's spontaneous verbalizations were requests for materials, those materials were withheld until she had responded to the teachers'

questions about those materials. When she was silent, the teachers withheld their attention and the materials. A high frequency of verbal behavior was quickly established. When both teacher attention and materials were provided only when the child was not verbalizing, the child's frequency of talking immediately decreased. When social attention and materials were again made contingent upon spontaneous speech and answering questions, the child's frequency of talking quickly increased to its previous high level. The content of the child's increased verbal behavior was primarily a repetition of requests to the teachers, with little change noted in non-request verbalizations or verbalizations to other children. A further experimental analysis demonstrated that social interaction was not the reinforcer which maintained the increased verbalization; rather, for this child, the material reinforcers which accompanied the social interaction appeared to be effective components of teacher attention.

Reynolds and Risley (1968) believed that classroom management skills should be actively employed in classroom situations where motivation is of key importance to the success or failure of children, especially disadvantaged minority group children. Teacher-training programs are failing to develop specific competencies in teachers which would allow them to modify their teaching of bilingual/multicultural children and Anglo children as well. Castillo and Cruz (1974) stated that certain basic educational traits are common to all groups of children, regardless of cultural and linguistic differences, and teachers need to develop certain basic competencies to meet these educational demands.

Any attempt to understand minority group children depends upon teachers recognizing the fact that these children possess a set of values different from those of Anglo Americans. It is that difference in values which constantly creates misunderstandings resulting in lack of empathy for, sensitivity toward, and acceptance of the minority child.

Hernandez (1969) stated that some teachers try to compensate for these differences in values by imposing on their students values that reflect their own personal background. However, such teachers are inevitably at a disadvantage, for in the imposition of their own values, they are implying that they do not recognize minority group cultures as entities or consider them worthy of recognition, and consequently cannot expect success with their teaching.

Although several universities have initiated teacher training programs to prepare special educators to deal with multicultural exceptional children, many will lack critical competencies and leave many concerns unanswered. The following concerns have been identified by Gonzales (1979) as critical to meeting the needs of the multicultural exceptional child.

1. Language is one of the most often identified areas of concern to the multicultural community. To many educators, a non-English language is a handicap; rarely is it considered a

strength. Special education has for years stressed the need to work with the child's strengths, which should include his language. A special educator unfamiliar with the child's language will naturally not be able to treat it as important and will refer to it as a deficit.

2. Familiarity with the culture likewise has proven to be a significant factor rarely taken into account by special educators. The problem develops in distinguishing educational deficits due to cultural and linguistic differences, from those identified as true learning disabilities according to definition. Diagnostic procedures to date have failed to accurately make that distinction, as well as failing to take socio-cultural variables such as those described by Mercer (1977) into consideration.

3. Training programs: The critical problem at the university level will be that of teacher educators who themselves do not have the experience to prepare special educators to teach in a multicultural setting. Regardless of their ethnic background, they themselves were trained in a typical monocultural, monolingual setting.

4. Training activities: Programs such as the Cultural Awareness Centers located throughout the country can be instrumental in meeting part of the competency needs. In addition, the need for real-world experience in the community is a must, since there is no other way that an individual can begin to understand cultural differences, and his/her own prejudices, and begin to empathize with the culturally different child. Two types of empathy will be needed: the situational approach, which must be supplemented by a systematic study of pedagogically, relevant aspects of the sociology, anthropology, and linguistics of the inner city, or rural poverty, suburbia, or any part of society from which a pupil comes. (pp. 11-13)

In light of this, the need for a competency-based training program for teachers of bilingual, minority group, exceptional children must emerge. A competency-based training program involves the identification of teacher competencies which have both empirical or conceptual basis meriting inclusion in bilingual special education (Prieto, Rueda, and Rodriguez, 1981). As part of an attempt to establish a competency-based training program for bilingual multicultural exceptional children, Prieto, Rueda and Rodriguez (1981) have stated that the following competencies are deemed important to special education teachers of bilingual, minority group exceptional children:

1. Ways to involve parents of bilingual/multicultural exceptional children in the educational process.

2. Assessment of bilingual/multicultural exceptional children in terms of classroom performance, i.e., through the use of task analytic or criterion referenced tests.

3. Specific methods of working with bilingual/multicultural exceptional children in the classroom.

4. Familiarizing teachers with the language or dialects of certain bilingual/multicultural exceptional children.

5. Interpreting and using assessment data of a normative nature, i.e., from a psychologist, such as the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children.

6. Training parents to work more effectively with their own bilingual/multicultural exceptional children.

7. Learning how to act as a resource person/consultant to train other teachers to work with bilingual/multicultural exceptional children.

8. Examining the role of parents and family in the education of bilingual/multicultural exceptional children.

9. Examining current research related to the identification and learning characteristics of bilingual/multicultural exceptional children.

10. Examining how to comply with federal and state laws related to the education of bilingual/multicultural children, i.e., how to write an adequate IEP.

11. Defining the bilingual/multicultural exceptional child.

12. Examining the cultural backgrounds of exceptional children from different ethnic groups.

13. Learning how to evaluate commercially available programs and/or materials developed for use with bilingual/multicultural exceptional children. (p. 268-270)

The rationale for a competency-based training program for teachers of bilingual, minority group exceptional children is clearly defined in the concept of cultural democracy, which stipulates the incorporation into the educational process of the language, culture and learning style of bilingual children (Castaneda, 1976). Through such a concept, educational experiences are provided to this group which still allow them to remain identified with home socialization experiences, regardless of whether these experiences are designated cultural and/or linguistic.

Involving Mexican American Parents in School

The overwhelming number of studies done on the effect of parental influence on the socialization of children, give strong support to the importance of involving parents in educational activities of the school (Feshbach, 1973; Laosa, 1977; Meadow and Meadow, 1971). Attitudes toward appropriate school behaviors develop in the home to the extent that they are reinforced by parents. As a result, children often reflect their parent's attitudes in certain matters, especially those concerning school (Cooper and Edgar, 1978; Kroth, 1975; Rutherford and Edgar, 1979). Parental involvement, therefore, is a valuable resource whose full potential has not yet been realized (Bridge, 1976). However, for many minority group parents the goal of being actively involved in their children's school is unattainable at present. The major reason that these parents will not become involved in their chidren's school is that many educators maintain the attitude that minority group parents are uninterested in the academic progress of their children and thus are unwilling to participate in any school-related activities. Educators, therefore, are hesitant to solicit participation since they feel certain they will fail. In spite of legislative mandates emphasizing parental involvement, i.e., P.L. 94-142, educators are still reluctant to include parents, particularly minority group parents, in any decision-making activities of the school. The failure to involve minority group parents in educational policymaking activities of a school represents a tremendous loss in human resources for the parent, the child, the minority group to which he or she belongs, and the school as a whole (Rodriguez, in press).

Some investigators have reported that most minority group children are at a disadvantage in the traditional Anglo-oriented educational system (Mercer and Lewis, 1977; Samuda, 1975). They state that these children are restricted in educational opportunities, since the school is not meeting their educational needs as the students and parents view them.

The lack of attention to the diverse educational needs of culturally and linguistically different children has perpetuated a self-fulfilling prophecy with regard to academic failure of minorities (Samuda, 1976). That is to say, lack of success creates more failure, which in turn generates anxiety and frustrations, which eventually culminate in the destruction of self-concept (Hernandez, 1969). For example, C.P. de Burciaga and others (1974), studying Mexican American education, reported that for every 10 Mexican American children entering first grade, only 6 remain in school and graduate. In contrast, nearly 9 of every 10 Anglo children remain in school and receive a high school diploma. Further, a 1971 study of student achievement in Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas reports that: (1) 15.9% of Mexican American children repeated first grade; (2) in the eighth grade, 58% of Black Americans and 64% of Mexican Americans were reading below grade level (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1971). In addition, on the basis of data from the Bureau of the Census, it was reported that the number of median school

years completed by Black Americans and Native Americans was 9.8, and was 8.1 for Mexican Americans (Banks, 1979). Furthermore, in Colorado during the 1975-1976 school year, of the 150,262 minority group children in public school grades 10 to 12, 11,646 (14.4% of them Mexican American) dropped out of school (Chicano Education Project, 1978). Although these figures are based on observations in the Southwest, it is reasonable to expect that similar conditions occur wherever significant minority populations exist.

A number of reasons have been discussed for this educational calamity. Among these is that limited proficiency in the English language has a negative influence on children's learning capacities, since the ability to communicate is restrained (Gonzalez, 1973). In addition, some investigators have raised serious issues regarding the use of standardized psychological assessment measures with culturally and linguistically different minority group children (Bernal, 1979; Mercer, 1973). Others have discussed the issue in terms of educational limitations due to budgetary deficiencies resulting from the abject economic state of the home (Clark and Plotkin, 1972). Some have discussed the effect of negative teacher attitudes on the academic achievement of minority group children (Jones, 1972; Laosa, 1973). Finally, some authors state that parental involvement in the educational processes of school is critical to the academic success or failure of children, particularly minority group children (Arciniega, Casaus and Castillo, 1978; Fanning, 1977; Kroth, 1975; McDowell, 1976). These authors point out that parent conferences provide school personnel with knowledge of language usage in the home, expectations and perceptions of the parents, and general home situations, thus allowing more information to be included in an instructional design.

Some authors, however, have voiced serious concerns regarding the lack of minority group parent involvement in school (Aragon, 1973; Jaramillo, 1974; Sierra, 1973). They state that many of these parents lack the necessary communication skills in the English language, and therefore feel inadequate and uninformed. These authors point out that many minority group parents view school through their own past experiences with the system. Problems of classroom conflict, teacher insensitivity, frustration, low academic achievement and high dropout rates among minorities were issues then as they are today. As a result, most minority group parents avoid any contact with school, which in turn brings about negative attitudes from teachers and administrators. The devastating result affects the child, who suffers when parents and teachers work at cross-purposes, each pulling different ways (Rodriguez, in press).

Communicating with parents, particularly minority group parents, requires efforts in searching for ways to convey information. Efforts to involve minority group parents should be based on a series of attempts until the right one works, that is, until the parent comes to the school. It requires an openness on the part of the teacher, to accept the parent, not as a combatant in the battlefield, but rather a useful and reliable resource in the classroom (Kroth, 1975).

If one agrees that parents are a vital part of a total educational program, if one acknowledges that traditional educational processes have failed to provide appropriate educational environments for minority groups, and if one holds the opinion that parent-teacher relationships enhance positive child growth, the challenge is quite clear.

The State of New Mexico Title I Advisory Committee on Parental Involvement (1978) developed some suggetions for educators to use with parents of Title I children. Because of their applicability to the parental component of P.L. 94-142, these suggestions should be considered by teachers of minority group exceptional children. These suggestions are:

1. Involving Parents in Policy/Decision-Making.

   The framework of P.L. 94-142 allows more inclusion of parental input than parents are accustomed to. Parents are indeed capable of participating in policy and decision-making, but need sufficient information and instruction in order to do so. Passing out information is frequently not enough to train parents adequately; therefore, a workshop where such materials are explained and where there is an opportunity for parents to ask questions in a non-threatening atmosphere is needed. It is important that money be allowed at the district level for parent training workshops.

2. Parents in the School and in the Classroom.

   It is of major importance to persuade parents to feel free to come into the school as visitors or as helpers. Their presence and participation should be sincerely welcomed and eagerly solicited by teachers and administrators.

   Every classroom should provide an area where visiting parents can sit and observe. Folders containing children's recent work should be on display for the parents to review when they visit. It is important to encourage parents to make presentations about their occupations, hobbies or crafts, etc.

   Parents can make a valuable contribution as tutors to reinforce classroom learning. The most important step in this direction is to keep parents informed about what is going on in the classroom so that they may follow up classroom activities in the home. In this regard, it would be useful to train parents in techniques to help children practice new skills. For example, Parent Effectiveness Training or other self-concept related training might be included in workshops provided for teachers.

   The ultimate step in parental involvement is the trained classroom assistant or volunteer. There are many tasks that volunteer parents can perform, such as audio-visual assistance,

preparing and making materials and assisting in laboratory classes and record-keeping, and as teacher-aides to provide more individualized instruction. Their presence in the classroom, particularly in the primary grades, helps children make the transition from home to school much more easily.

3. More Effective Parental Involvement

It is helpful to change the setting of meetings from the school building. Meetings can be held in home, community centers or churches. Another way to get parents to meetings is to have children put on an activity. Also, potluck suppers, banquets, and other informal social formats are far better than traditional meetings. However, none of these will encourage parent participation nearly as well as making them sense their importance to the program.

In districts with sufficient funds, it is most advantageous to hire a full-time person who can devote time to parent involvement and make the personal contacts which are so important. This is also a justifiable expenditure under P.L. 94-142, and perhaps one of the best ways to insure that parental involvement receives the attention it needs.

As mentioned previously, parents must be kept informed in order to be helpful in meetings and to their children. A district newsletter could be useful in this regard, both for announcing and reporting about meetings and for keeping parents informed on activities in the classroom. Parents might either assist with the newsletter or produce it themselves. Another service the newsletter could perform would be to keep parents, and teachers as well, informed of changes in the regulations or of new requirements.

4. Evaluating Parental Involvement.

In attempting to evaluate the effectiveness of a parental involvement program, the following questions might be asked:

-How many parents are involved in the school program?

-How many parents are involved in each phase of the program: (1) in the classroom, (2) in decision making, (3) other?

-Are there any cognitive or affective changes in the children?

-How often are parents making suggestions or asking questions about the educational programs of the district?

-What changes have occurred in teachers with relation to parental involvement?

-Is the parental involvement component changing in response to changing needs and skills of parents, community, teachers, and aides?

Is there other local, state and national legislation, such as Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act or P.L. 93-380, that would coordinate and complement the efforts stemming from P.L. 94-142?

-Are parents disseminating information to other parents and community agencies?

-Are parental attitudes toward school and teachers changing?

-Are teacher attitudes toward parents and community changing?

-Are the attitudes of children toward parents, teachers and the community changing?

The answers to the above questions can give parents, teachers, and administrators a good measure of the commitment and effort that are being put into a parent involvement component.

There is still a great deal of work to be done in the area of minority group parent involvement. The challenge is the child's future, which is, of course, the purpose of education (Rodriguez, in press). It becomes a matter of getting schools interested in working with minority group parents in positive ways. Positive parent-school relationships should stimulate the development of discussion groups of teachers, principals, and parents who meet to discuss, share ideas, problem-solve and mutually arrive at decisions which affect the educational future of the children (Becker, 1971; Lichter, 1976). The end result is a cooperative effort based on mutual and sincere respect for the part each plays in the life of the child (Kroth, 1975).

Identification of Gifted Mexican American Children

At present, more educational emphasis has been directed toward meeting the educational needs of children from culturally and linguistically different minority groups, but there are still shortcomings. Recent litigation procedures exemplify the concern (P.L. 94-142). However, in the process of providing educational experiences, educators have completely neglected the gifted child within this population (Sato, 1974). Much of the blame for the under-representation of cuturally and linguistically different minority group gifted children is directed to the procedures used in identification (Bernal and Reyna, 1975; Gallagher and Kinney, 1974; Gay, 1978; Frasier, 1979).

It has been hypothesized that present I.Q. assessment procedures identify only one gifted minority child in every three, and much of

this is due to the lack of proper identification procedures (Bernal, 1974, 1979). Studies by Meeker (1971) and Bruch (1970) suggest that early identification and intervention is of crucial importance in any program for gifted children. Bernal (1972) and Bernal and DeAvila (1976) suggest it is inadvisable to attempt early identification using culturally biased instruments, since traditional assessment measures identify only the most acculturated minority child.

The measurement of creativity, such as artistic capability, as an alternative to intelligence testing of potentially gifted minority children, has been discussed by some investigators (Swenson, 1978). From this perspective, creativity represents a more positive approach to assessment, and one which offers minority group children a fair chance to excel.

Some investigators have discussed the use of behavior rating scales to identify potentially gifted minority group children, specifically Mexican American children (Bernal, 1974). Behavior rating scales are usually administered by teachers and/or parents, and attempt to identify those behaviors perceived as revealing giftedness in children. Since giftedness differs from culture to culture and is always defined in a social context, Bernal (1974) believes that culturally and linguistically different minority group children have unique social and cultural values which should be regarded as characteristic of giftedness.

Bernal and DeAvila (1976) have suggested the use of Piagetian-based tasks as a possible alternative to traditional intelligence measures, since cultural and socioeconomic factors seemingly show less effect on Piagetian tasks than on traditional I.Q. tests.

Some researchers have concluded that teacher observation is the key factor in the identification process (Passow, 1972; Sato, 1974). However, a report prepared by Marland for the U.S. Office of Education Commissioner (1971) as a study of educational practices reported that teachers fail to identify 50% of gifted children.

Mercer and Lewis (1977), and DeAvila (1976) have proposed the System of Multicultural Pluralistic Assessment (SOMPA) and the Cartoon Conservation Scales (CCS) as alternatives for the identification of potentially gifted minority children, since these instruments were specifically designed for minority school-age children and are practical to administer in school settings. Research to establish validity of these alternatives is needed.

As a final alternative assessment procedure, some authors have called for multiple measures of giftedness. Bernal and Reyna (1975), for example, discussed the need for a philosophy of "inclusion" for minority students that will qualify them under any one of the identification methods, such as tests, case studies, teacher, parent or peer nomination, or other evidence of creative and/or high achievement.

Gallagher and Kinney (1974) reported that many teachers are not equipped with the necessary teaching methodology for capitalizing on the strengths of culturally different children. In their opinion, many teacher-training programs fail to prepare teachers properly to meet all the educational needs of minority group children, and since teachers play a crucial role in identification, they present a barrier to the educational success of the gifted minority child. Sato (1974) expressed the notion that any educational program is only as effective as the person teaching in that program.

Bernal (1979) pointed out that an educational program for the culturally different gifted must provide children with the opportunity to learn not only receptively but productively as well. Also, children must be encouraged to venture, risk, reflect and become involved in projects that they themselves consider meaningful. Furthermore, educational programs for culturally different gifted students should build on individual assets, foster interethnic understanding, and widen the "style-of-life" options for all students (Passow, 1972). Frasier (1979) suggested that since many minority group gifted children lack certain educational experiences, which lacks reflect in their poor performance on traditional educational assessment measures, such performance can be viewed as a lack of exposure to academically valuable experience rather than as a sign of deficiencies in the child.

Only recently has the gifted minority group child received the attention of educators. Problems of identification have created obstacles in educational planning. As Gallagher and Kinney (1974) stated, "Until new ways of identifying the gifted are incorporated into school practice, it is unlikely that programs which aid culturally different children will be highly developed" (p. 7).

It is evident that culturally and linguistically different minority group children are under-represented in programs for the gifted and talented (Mercer, 1976). Traditional standardized assessment measures alone have not adequately identified these children. As a result, more efficient identification procedures must be implemented if educational systems are to meet the educational needs of culturally and linguistically different gifted children. One possible alternative is multi-assessment strategies that will qualify the child under any one of a variety of identification methods (Bernal, 1979). This approach appears to be a step in the right direction, since such assessment would hopefully stop penalizing culturally and linguistically minority group children for their cutural heritage.

DISCUSSION

Implications

A plan which would enhance parental involvement in the educational process would greatly enhance the establishment of better and more efficient educational programming. Kroth (1975) pointed out that from early in the history of the United States, parents saw a need for the establishment of schools. They combined their time, money, and efforts to improve the education of their children. However, in contemporary times parents are sometimes seen only as producers of children for educators to teach. He stressed the unification of teachers and parents as partners in efforts to maximize children's educational growth, rather than as opponents. Efforts of teacher-training institutions should be directed toward instilling in teacher trainees a sense of responsibility to acknowledge and support efforts for better parental involvement, thus recognizing that the backbone of a school is the parent.

Past research efforts have shown that many bilingual minority group children demonstrate problems in reading, writing, and arithmetic skills (Rodriguez, 1980). An obvious remedy for this is teacher training in task analysis and effective teaching strategies. Siegal (1972) emphasized that the keystone to effective child learning is effective teaching, that is, the teacher's ability to redirect teaching efforts so as to think along these lines: "I know how to play checkers. Can I teach this child to play checkers and what is the best way for him to learn?" (p. 531).

Some researchers have stated that discriminatory practices exist in the psychological assessment of minority group children, particularly in the case of Mexican American children. According to the task force findings specifying remedies available for eliminating past educational practices ruled unlawful under Lau versus Nichols (U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1975), educational assessments should be made by persons who can speak and comprehend the language of the child. However, in the public schools there is a shortage of persons, primarily certified educational diagnosticians, who are fluent in both English and Spanish and who are qualified to make educational judgments affecting minority group children and to take sociocultural variables into account.

Policies must be established by teacher training institutions to recruit minority group teachers and diagnosticians capable of applying teaching expertise and implementing educational cultural pluralism in the educational setting of minority group students. School districts

across the country are searching for and attempting to implement multicultural educational programs for their school-age populations. Rodriguez (1980) provides school personnel with data that show the effect sociocultural factors have on academic achievement, thus offering curriculum builders and teachers avenues for better understanding the academically deficient child and, at the same time, challenging educators to provide educational materials, instruction, and classroom environments relevant to each child.

Finally, it must be remembered that assessment is only the first step in an educational program. Identification must be followed by diagnosis, appropriate intervention, and relevant classroom instruction. However, before the teaching begins, Labov (1970) offers a passage which may well serve as an excellent word of warning:

> Before we impose middle-class verbal style upon children from other cultural groups, we should find out how much of this is useful for the main work of analyzing and generalizing, and how much is merely stylistic--or even dysfunctional. In high school and college middle-class children spontaneously complicate their syntax to the point that instructors despair of getting them to make their language simpler and clearer. In every learned journal one can find examples of jargon and empty elaboration--and complaints about it. Is the "elaborated code" of Bernstein really so "flexible, detailed, and subtle" as some psychologists believe?...Is it not simply an elaborated style, rather than a superior code or system?
>
> Our work in the speech community makes it painfully obvious that in many ways working-class speakers are more effective narrators, reasoners, and debaters than many middle-class speakers who temporize, qualify, and lose their argument in a mass of irrelevant detail. Many academic writers try to rid themselves of that part of middle-class style that is empty pretension, and keep that part that is needed for precision. But the average middle-class speaker that we encounter makes no such effort; he is enmeshed in verbiage, the victim of sociolinguistic factors beyond his control. (p. 12)

Conclusion

The struggle of American minority groups for their rights in traditional, monocultural educational systems has characterized the past decade in the history of public education (Mercer, 1976). If school administrators, psychologists, and educators continue to defend Anglo-conformity assumptions concerning the education of minority groups, they will find themselves preserving an elitist and ethnocentric educational system which segregates, discriminates, and labels minority group children (Samuda, 1976). However, if the goal

of education is to improve the education provided for all students, especially for those with highly individualized styles of learning, educational leaders must initiate steps to develop educational processes which are culturally democratic, that is to say, processes which are racially and culturally nondiscriminatory. Through such a philosophy, educational procedures should evolve which will educate all children to the maximum possible, regardless of language, culture, and socioeconomic status.

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In May of 1973, he was awarded a training grant from the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare so he could continue his education in the field of special education. Also, in July of 1975, he was awarded the Title VII Fellowship Training Grant, to continue his education in the field of bilingual special education. In the Spring of 1979, Richard was awarded grants from the Graduate Student Association and Graduate School Committee on Research at the University of New Mexico, to enable him to extend his research efforts in the field of bilingual special education.

Richard's professional experiences began as a social studies teacher at Snell Junior High School, Bayard, New Mexico; following that he was a special education teacher at Snell Junior High. He served as an Upward Bound instructor at Western New Mexico University, Silver City, New Mexico. He was also an instructor in the Department of Special Education, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico. He served as Project Director at Albuquerque Technical-Vocational Institute, where he supervised a vocational training program for handicapped adults. He was Assistant Professor in the Department of Special Education, Arizona State University, Tempe. While at Arizona State University, he developed the Multicultural Exceptional Child emphasis area for the Department of Education and Psychology, Western New Mexico University, Silver City.

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